



PRESS RELEASE
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SOLAR CENTURY LAUNCHES MAJOR PV MARKETING CAMPAIGN IN UK

A unique marketing campaign begins this week. Solar Century, the Richmond-based solar photovoltaic (PV) company, will spend half a million dollars over the next few months in an effort to kick-start the solar electric market in the UK. The company is targeting a series of niche markets across the homes, commercial, industrial and small-scale sectors. Solar Century has raised finance for the campaign from environmentally-concerned European investors on the back of a UK marketing trial last year that showed extensive latent interest in PV, across a wide and varied potential marketplace.

In the homes sector, Solar Century began an installation programme in the last quarter of 1999. The company is already working on its seventh turnkey project, and has a book of orders exceeding 30kW and hundreds of sales leads to follow up. Solar Century has installed grid-connected systems using AstroPower, Atlantis, and United Solar technologies, for all of which it is sole distributor in the UK, barring several small pre-existing agents. On one installation, the company has worked with major contractor Bovis. Even ahead of the marketing trial, the company is in discussions with some of the UK's biggest corporate names, including in property and retailing.

Solar Century will be co-sponsoring an exhibition featuring solar in cities at the Royal Institute of British Architects HQ, starting 14th April. The exhibition is entitled "The Living City", and solar will be a key theme. Other sponsors of the exhibition are the famous UK-based architecture practice Richard Rogers Partnership, and London First, a coalition of major businesses in the capital. The event should allow the company to extend the message that PV works - and looks great - to most if not all architects in the country.

Solar Century's e-commerce website goes live today (www.solarcentury.co.uk). The company plans to evolve the site fast, and significantly expand the range of services and products offered. Solar Century aims to build a brand rooted in the environmental and social imperatives for using PV.

Solar Century currently has 16 fulltime-equivalent staff operating in the UK, compared to 10 at BP Solarex, 3 at Siemens, and 1 at Shell. Solar Century engineers have worked for Halcrow, BP Solar and giant retailer Habitat. The marketing director, Mike Perry, was managing director of an advertising agency that ran global campaigns for Nike and Microsoft. A key marketing board member, Bob Worcester, is Chairman of consumer research organization MORI. A key energy-industry board member, Roger Booth, was head of renewable energy at Shell.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

Unlike almost all other industrialized countries, the UK government currently has no market-enablement programme for PV. In the uncluttered market that this has resulted in, Solar Century is targeting a surprising number of economic applications, plus first movers in the homes and commercial sectors.

Solar Century is the brainchild of Dr Jeremy Leggett, Charterhouse Fellow in Solar Energy at Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute. Leggett is CEO and Chairman. The company began in 1997 as a non-profit investment club and consumer alliance. By 1998, having stimulated some support but insufficient to accelerate the PV market, Leggett moved to a for-profit model. He spent over a year scoping business models, an exercise which has led to the current marketing-led entrepreneurial venture.

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